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THURSDAY, March 19, 2026

The Courier Leader

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Volume 127, Issue 21 wilcoxnewspapers.com • 269-657-3072 USPS 564-620

Village of Paw Paw pays tribute to its volunteers

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
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PAW PAW - A Volunteer Recognition Night was held Tuesday, March 10, at St. Julian Winery's Apollo Banquet Hall, where the Village of Paw Paw paid tribute to volunteers who had served on boards, commissions or committees.

Paw Paw Village Council President Roman Plaszczak said, "Every volunteer here is valuable to the Village of Paw Paw."

Special Recognitions were given to two individuals, Mary Lou Hartwell and Kathy Larson, each with more than 30 years continuous service.

Hartwell said in receiving her award," I've loved the village of Paw Paw since the first day I moved here. I've worked with so many amazing, talented people over the years.

Other volunteers honored included David Bogen, Barbara Carpenter, Marilyn Clear, Sara Cox, Sheila Croy, Sue Danielson, Jason Deibler-Love, Marty Deming Maytnier, Paul DeYoung, Maria Diaz, Rod Dragicevich, Tom Drake, Marcos Flores, Robin Griffin, Jean Gregory, David Guimond, Jewel Hurn, Nadine Jarvis, Dave Jones, Ellen Jones, Kim Jones, Kip Kerby, Patrick Lynch, Mary McIntosh, Christopher Moraitis, Kimberly Otten, Tom Palenick, Mike Pioch, Julie Pioch, Terri Simpkins, Chris Smith, MaryBeth Sons, Mary Springer, Eddie Thomas, Frank Thomas, Adele Thomas, Janet Wartman, Anna Wawra, and James Whelen

Kathy Larson – more than 30 years continuous service

Mary Lou Hartwell – more than 30 years continuous service

United Christian Services (UCS) fundraiser surpasses $45,000

PAW PAW - United Christian Services held its fifth annual themed "Cups of Compassion" Thursday, March 12, at 600 E. Michigan Ave. The sold-out event gave those who attended an opportunity to choose a hand painted cup, enjoy a catered dinner and dessert, and learn how contributions have made a difference in the local community.

According to Alison Harrop, United Christian Services Director, more than $45,000 was raised from the event.

United Christian Services of Van Buren County is a 501 c (3) non-profit, based in Paw Paw. It provides emergency assistance to families and individuals in crisis. It offers food clothing (Lydia's Closet), and financial help for rent, utilities and propane. UCS operates by supporting basic needs while encouraging self-sufficiency.

Harrop told those gathered, "There is great need for help for people in our county who live at or below, or just above the ALICE threshold. ALICE is an acronym meaning Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed," said Harrop.

Harrop said ALICE households are essential. "Alice is the gas attendant, daycare worker, supermarket employee, factory worker, home healthcare provider. They might mow your lawn, clear the snow, serve you in a restaurant, or clean your home or office. Their wages cannot keep up with the rising costs of goods and services.

"Their families often include family members who need care and assistance, making it difficult to find adequate work, and therefore their schedules are harder to navigate," said Harrop.

According to the 2023 United Way ALICE report in Van Buren County that is 37 percent.

"A total of 58 percent of jobs in Michigan pay less than $20 an hour. Consider that a single person needs to bring home $12 an hour fulltime pay, and a family of four needs to bring home $32 an hour just to make ends meet, you can see the problem," said Harrop.

She continued, "By the way, this calculation does not include saving toward a pension, school fees, or even an emergency fund. Vacations - even Christmas are luxuries that are out of reach for these families. Therefore, ALICE lives paycheck to paycheck and regularly have to make choices between paying for food or the rent, paying for health insurance or paying for childcare, pay a utility bill or put gas in the car to get to work. One disaster such as their car breaking down, sickness or injury, meaning time off work, or a furnace needing to be replaced, can start the slippery slope to homelessness, or living in permanent debt."

Harrop continued, "Our organization is sometimes the bridge to sustainability when a family is facing crisis. We try not to duplicate services; therefore, we work with other agencies such as DHHS, SMCAA, Area Agency on Aging, Salvation Army, WeCare and more to bring help and hope to people facing the worst times of their lives."

Harrop said, "When you don't live in poverty and you have a bad day, you can go to bed that night and sleep it off. When you live in poverty, you do not have that option. Another day, another struggle."

She continued, "Poverty is because of brokenness. We live in a broken world of broken relationships. Our relationships with God, with creation and with each are corrupted. We cannot fix the problem. There is only one who can. In the Bible we are given several words of wisdom to follow to make the world a nicer place: the great commandment tells us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and love our neighbors as ourselves. And the 'golden rule' to do to others what you would want them to do to you."

In 2025, United Christian Services made a difference for 6,284 households in Van Buren County by providing emergency assistance, supplemental food, clothing, free diapers, and free laundry. "We connected 594 households with help through other agencies impacting over 1200 people," said Harrop.

Harrop concluded, "When you donate to UCS, your donation is to a non-profit. USC is tax deductible, with tax receipts upon request. We do not duplicate services. We work with agencies, so we help in the gap. We are all volunteers here so there is no big wage bill. Statistics sheet tells how much we save because we don't pay wages."

For more information about UCS or to volunteer, contact Harrop at (269) 415-0767.

Congressional Medal of Honor recipient visits Paw Paw Middle School

In an all-school assembly on Tuesday, March 10, students at Paw Paw Middle School had the rare opportunity to hear a message from Congressional Medal of Honor recipient, James C. McCloughan. Born and raised in Van Buren County, Specialist Five McCloughan spoke of his service as an Army combat medic in the Vietnam War. In his remarks to the students and staff, McCloughan emphasized the importance of living by these six pillars: Patriotism, Commitment, Sacrifice, Courage, Citizenship, and Integrity. McCloughan is shown

with his wife, Cherie McCloughan, and at left, Middle School Principal Jerry McDaniel, also an Army veteran, and at far right, Middle School Assistant Principal, Troy Schultz.

McCloughan ended his presentation by singing the patriotic anthem, "God Bless the USA" made famous by Lee Greenwood.

Photos courtesy/Paw Paw Public Schools

Multiple crashes reported late Monday along stretch of I-94, causing westbound shutdown

VAN BUREN COUNTY - On Monday, March 16, at approximately 5:45 p.m., Van Buren County Dispatch began receiving multiple 911 calls reporting numerous traffic crashes along westbound Interstate-94 near the 56-mile marker, according to a press release from the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office.

Sheriff's deputies responding to the area discovered a large-scale incident involving approximately 60 vehicles. Several semi-trucks had jackknifed, contributing to a complete shutdown of westbound I-94.

At approximately the same time, additional crashes were reported on eastbound I-94 near the 52-mile marker. These incidents resulted in the closure of eastbound lanes as well, effectively shutting down traffic in both directions.

Deputies on scene managed a significant 20-vehicle crash near the 55-mile marker westbound, along with an additional four-vehicle crash in the same area. The closures caused extensive traffic delays and contributed to multiple secondary crashes and slide-offs on surrounding roadways.

Weather conditions at the time of the incidents were reported as white-out conditions, significantly reducing visibility and creating hazardous driving conditions.

I-94 remained closed for approximately three hours while emergency personnel and tow services worked to clear the roadway. The highway was fully reopened at approximately 9 p.m.

The Van Buren County Sheriff's Office reminds motorists to use extreme caution during severe winter weather conditions, reduce speed, and allow for additional travel time.

Mike Toth appointed to fill county commission vacancy

Mike Toth appointed as new county commissioner

By Paul Garrod

Staff Writer

news4garrod@gmail.com

PAW PAW - A former Van Buren County Commissioner was appointed March 10 to fill a vacant seat following the recent death of District 5 County Commissioner Randall "Randy" Peat.

Mike Toth was appointed to fill the unexpired term of Peat. Toth said he will not seek election in the Nov. 3 General Election.

Commissioners approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Southwest Michigan Planning Commission (SWMPC) for the purposes of the Digital Information Department via the Digital Innovation Collaborative Exchange (DICE) to rebuild and modernize the MyWayThere organization website platform and associated mobility tools.

The financial impact is a one-time development cost of $9,720, and the annual operating costs estimated to be $2,112, to be adjusted annually.

Commissioners approved a MOU with SWMPC for the purpose of the Digital Information Department via the Digital Innovation Collaborative Exchange (DICE) to rebuild and modernize the SWMPC website platform and associated mobility tools, as well as a MOU with SWMPC to rebuild the US-12 Heritage Trail website.

The financial impact will be a one-time development cost of US-12 Heritage Trail website of $11,250, and total annual operating costs estimated to be $2,112, to be adjusted annually, and a one-time development cost of SWMPC website platform of $9,720. Annual operating costs are estimated to be $2,112, to be adjusted annually.

Commissioners approved a resolution of support for submission of the 2026 Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Grant Applications to the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD).

The Van Buren County Land Preservation Board administers the County's Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program to permanently preserve productive agricultural land through agricultural conservation easements in partnership with the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development (MDARD).

For the 2026 grant cycle, the Land Preservation Board reviewed and scored eligible applications in accordance with the county's adopted selection criteria and is recommending submission of the application, Carl and Amy Druskovich / Druskovich Farms – Hamilton Township (approximately 219.36 acres; 30 percent local match). The application exceeds the minimum 25 percent local match requirement, improving competitiveness for state funding consideration. The proposed project protects productive agricultural soils, supports multigeneration farming operations, strengthens blocks of contiguous preserved farmland, and is consistent with local zoning and master plans. Approval of this resolution expresses the county's formal support and authorizes submission of the applications to MDARD for funding consideration.

There is no financial impact associated with approval of this Resolution of Support. Local match commitments are provided by the applicants.

Commissioners approved the Village of Paw Paw's and other entities' recurring use of various county properties during 2026 as outlined below:

National Day of Prayer: an annual event on the first Thursday in May. In 2026, this date is May 7, from noon until 1 p.m. in front of and on the Van Buren County Courthouse steps. The event will include a children's choir performance along with clergy from the community who will take turns leading prayers.

Paw Paw Village Farmers' Market: a new summer-long event sponsored by the Village of Paw Paw. The request is to use the Courtyard Park for the 2026 Farmers Market Season, 8 a.m.to 3 p.m. every Sunday, May 17 through Oct. 18, excluding the weekend of the Wine and Harvest Festival (Sept. 13).

Warner Vineyards 2026 Summer Concert Series: The request is to use the paved, non-Sheriff, parking lots in Paw Paw for overflow parking during the Summer Concert Series, Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 11 p.m., May through Oct. 2026.

The Summer Concert Series provides significant economic benefits to local businesses by attracting visitors to area stores, restaurants, and other establishments.

Paw Paw Days: an annual event hosted by the Paw Paw Area Chamber of Commerce. The request is to use the Courtyard Park, Administration parking lot, Friday, July 24, 5 to 7 p.m., and Saturday, July 25, 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.

2026 Wine & Harvest Festival, an annual event attracting over 60,000 attendees the weekend after Labor Day, includes multiple activities that require use of county-owned properties including:

• 2026 Arts and Crafts Show, managed by the Paw Paw Service League, which uses proceeds to fund community projects, requires use of the County Park area, Courthouse parking lot, and the grassy area between St. Joseph and Berrien streets from Sept. 11-13.

• The 36th Annual Grape Lake 5K Run/Walk, hosted by Freshwater Community Church, requires use of the Human Services East parking lot at 801 Hazen St., Paw Paw as a parking and registration area on Sept. 12, 2026, from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

• The Paw Paw Vineyard Classic Bike Tour, organized by the Kalamazoo Experiential Learning Center, requires use of the Human Services East parking lot at 801 Hazen St., Paw Paw, as a parking and staging area on Sept. 13, from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Annual Lakeshore Harvest Ride, a community fundraising bike event promoting health and recreation, which requires use of the South Haven Courthouse parking lot for overflow parking when the Kal-Haven Trail Head reaches capacity on Sept. 19, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Christmas in the Village: the second year of the event sponsored by the Downtown Development Authority requires use of the main Courthouse parking lot and front yard area of Courthouse for the tree-lighting ceremony on Dec.11, and use of the Courtyard Park, Dec. 11- 13, for Christmas in the Park.

Commissioners approved the annual resolution for the continuation of the collection of the voter-approved 911 local surcharge.

Commissioners concluded that:

1. The Van Buren County Board of Commissioners concludes that the default county surcharge rate of $1.17 per device established by the MPSC in Case No. U-15489 must be increased in order for the county to meet its obligations associated with the reasonable and necessary expenses of operating and maintain its 9-1-1 system;

2. The Board of Commissioners hereby increases the default county surcharge rate established by the MPSC in Case No. U-15489 by $1.83 per device located within Van Buren County that can access 9-1-1 for the period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, as approved by the voters of Van Buren County at the August 2024 Primary Election.

3. With this increase, the county surcharge imposed by Van Buren County upon each service device located within Van Buren County that can access 9-1-1 shall be $3 for the period of July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027, as approved by the voters in the August 2024 Primary Election.

4. The Board of Commissioners hereby authorizes the County Administrator, in conjunction with the County Sheriff and County 9-1-1 Director, to make all necessary filings with the State of Michigan to ensure that the correct surcharge rate of $3 is imposed.

At the August 2024 primary election, Van Buren County voters approved the renewal of the current 911 Local Surcharge for the period of July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2029. The language provides for the annual review and resolution to collect the 911 Local Surcharge. This resolution continues the collection of the surcharge from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. The 911 Local Surcharge provides approximately 85 percent of the revenue for 911 in Van Buren County.

Reverting to the default of $1.17 would result in a loss of approximately 60 percent of necessary revenue to fund 911.

Pursuant to the Emergency 9-1-1 Service Enabling Act ("Enabling Act"), Public Act 32 of 1986, as amended, Van Buren County is authorized to impose a county surcharge upon telephonic service users within the county that can access 9-1-1.

The Michigan Public Service Commission ("MPSC"), in Case No. U-15489, established a default county surcharge rate for Van Buren County of $1.17 per user.

Section 401b of the Enabling Act states that in the event. Van Buren County proposes an increase to the amount approved by the MPSC in Case No. U-15489, it must do so with the following limitations: (a) up to $.42 per month by resolution; (b) up to $3 per month with the approval of the voters in the county; and, (c) any combination of (a) and (b) with a maximum county 9-1-1 charge of $3 per month.

Upon the expiration of the surcharge rate on June 30, 2026, the county surcharge would revert to the $1.17 default rate set by the MPSC in Case No. U-1.15489, absent resolution by the Board of Commissioners, resulting in significant reduction in revenue to operate and maintain the county's 9-1-1 system.

The August 2024 Primary Election, Van Buren County voters approved a 9-1-1 Surcharge Proposal authorizing Van Buren County to assess a county 9-1-1 emergency services charge on monthly billings to each service device located within Van Buren County that can access 9-1-1 at a rate not to exceed $1.83 each month in addition to the $1.17 surcharge established by the Michigan Public Service Commission in Case No. U-15489, subject to annual approval by the Van Buren County Board of Commissioners, for the period of July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2029, to be used exclusively for the funding of 9-1-1 emergency telephone call answering and dispatch services within Van Buren County, including facilities, equipment and operations.

After due consideration of the reasonable expense necessary to operate and maintain the county's 9-1-1 system, the Board of Commissioners has concluded that any reduction in the current surcharge would prove detrimental to the operation of the 9-1-1 system designed to assist with the protection and safety of Van Buren County residents, businesses and visitors.

Commissioners approved the adoption of a proposed countywide Cash Handling Policy.

Van Buren County Treasurer Trisha Nesbitt evaluated cash handling practices across departments and identified inconsistencies that increase the risk of error, loss, or misuse of funds. The revised policy establishes consistent, auditable standards for how cash and checks are received, recorded, secured, deposited, and reconciled. It reinforces key internal control principles such as separation of duties, timely deposits, documentation, and accountability.

Commissioners said these are common best practices in public finance and are intended to safeguard funds and protect the county and its employees. The policy addresses risks related specifically to cash and check handling, and area within the treasurer's statutory responsibilities, it also underscores the importance of continuing to evaluate internal controls in other operational areas. Commissioners said it is also important to note the county's external auditors do not specifically look for fraud nor do they make recommendations to prevent it. Their role is to assess financial statements for accuracy and compliance. Therefore, it remains the county's responsibility to proactively identify and strengthen safeguards to reduce the risk of fraud and misuse of funds.

The financial impact will be greater consistency and control, reducing the likelihood of fraud, and of how cash is handled throughout county courts, offices and departments.

Commissioners approved the DCS Broadband Consultant Agreement Extension.

The current contract with DCS expired Dec. 31, 2025. Commissioners were asked to consider extending the contract through Dec. 31, 2026, which is when the ARPA funds must be expended.

Commissioners said while the ROBIN work with MEC is on task and does not require much oversight, there is a substantial amount of work left to do with Comcast in the South Haven area.

Working with the BEAD program to fill the Lawrence gap continues, as does working with legislators to require that Mercury satisfies their RDOF obligations in the Geneva Township area.

The contract extension proposal is to retain DCS for $12,000 per month.

Commissioners approved the partial discharge of mortgage for the New Age Laboratories loan and approved the second amendment to the loan agreement.

New Age Laboratories previously received financial assistance through the Van Buren County Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The loan was secured by multiple parcels of real property. The business has requested a partial discharge of the mortgage to release the residential house and associated acreage while maintaining the remaining vacant parcels as collateral.

The Van Buren County EDC Board reviewed the request and evaluated the position of the existing loan and collateral. The EDC determined that releasing the house and acreage while retaining the remaining vacant parcels provides substantial collateral and maintains the EDC and Van Buren County in a strong and secure financial position. The remaining properties provide significant equity and place the County and EDC in first position on four parcels of real estate.

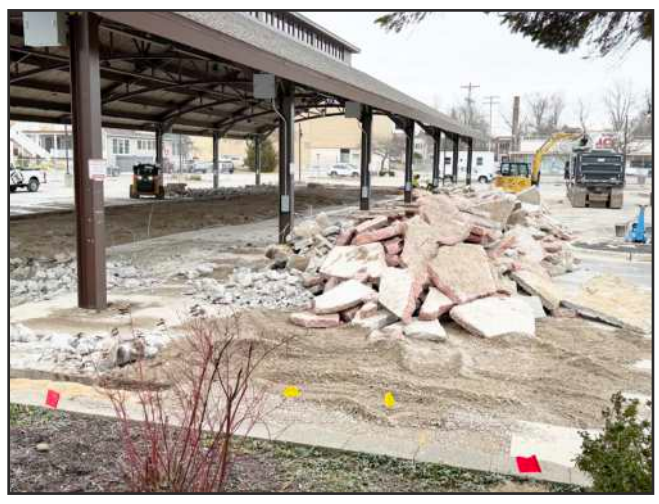
The requested change will allow the borrower to restructure certain existing financing and reduce higher-interest obligations. This restructuring is expected to improve the company's financial stability and allow additional capital to be reinvested into the business.

At its February meeting, the Van Buren County EDC Board approved a motion to proceed with the partial release of the house and acreage while maintaining the remaining vacant land parcels as collateral. The EDC recommended moving forward with the required approvals so the discharge documents can be executed and recorded.

In addition to the partial mortgage discharge, a second amendment to the loan agreement is required to reflect the updated collateral structure and loan terms associated with the release.

There is no direct financial impact to the county budget

Ice rink reconstruction begins



The ice was barely melted at South Haven's All-Season Pavilion when contractors moved-in to begin a major reconstruction project. The $800,000 rebuild is intended to improve the winter-time ice skating rink with a more efficient in-pad cooling system. The work is being doing in phases with the first to be completed in time for the use of the pavilion by the popular farm market in the summer months. The second phase will be completed in time for next winter's ice skating season. Photo by Tom Renner

2ND FRONT PAGE

MSP recover liquid drugs and firearm in traffic stop

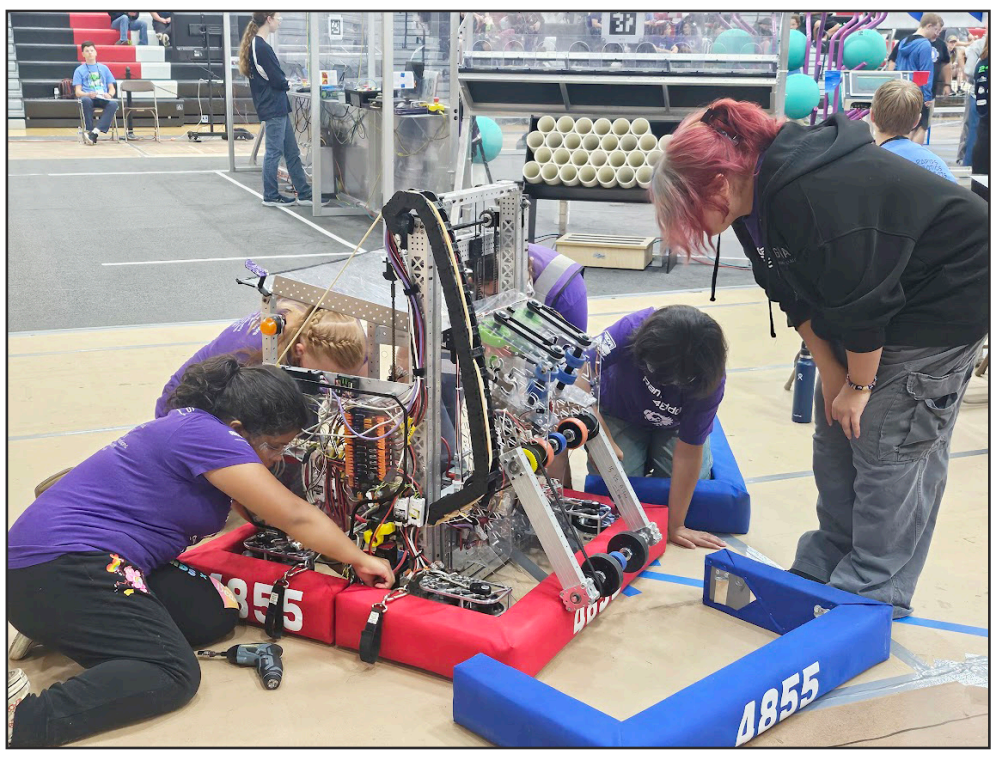
PAW PAW TWP. – On March 7, Michigan State troopers from the Fifth District conducted a traffic stop on Interstate 94 near Mile Marker 59. MSP was participating in the Six State Trooper Interdiction initiative.

The traffic stop was for a lane violation and improper registration. Troopers reported they found 20 boxes containing 240 bottles of Promethazine Hydrochloride that were not prescribed or legally purchased. According to authorities the drug is sometimes mixed with fruit juice or soda and other substances such as fentanyl before being sold legally.

A 23-year-old Mishawaka, IN, man who was driving the vehicle was arrested and transported to the Van Buren County Jail for carrying a concealed weapon. A passenger from South Bend, IN, was also arrested and transported to the Van Buren County Jail for receiving and concealing a stolen firearm.

The investigation remains open.

Ramageddon Robotics reveal introduces students' 2026 robot



James Windell

After a combined 1400 hours logged by Ramageddon, the South Haven Robotics Team was ready to hold their annual robot reveal on Wednesday, March 11, 2026 at South Haven High School.

Prior to introducing their robot, Coaches Kim Wise and Zach Van Huis introduced the students on the robotics team who hen did a slide presentation explaining what they have been doing since January and graciously thanking all of the parents, volunteers and sponsors who have donated time, labor and money to help support their team.

In the slide presentation, students explained the FIRST culture, which they follow. That culture teaches that robots are not to be used for destruction and breaking other team's robots will result in penalties. Furthermore, culture dictates that teams should engage in "coopertition," or helping opponents, and they should practice "gracious professionalism" – helping proactively, displaying good sportsmanship, and being a good teammate.

During their presentation, students updated the audience on programs they used to build their robot. They said they program in Java, and that they have implemented PhotonVision, which involves using multiple cameras for field localization. They are also using updated "swerve" programming, and that CAD (Computer-Aided Design) is employed to model parts, assemble virtually, and verify interactions before fabrication.

Just before showing their 2026 robot, named "Patrick," they explained how the competition will work. All teams this season had to develop a robot that would load yellow balls and then propel them into a basket. The team with the most balls in the basket wins the match.

Finally, it was time for the audience to meet Patrick. Patrick is a robot with purple bumpers and sponsor logos on side panels. In the live demonstration, Patrick gathered yellow balls and then shot those balls into a tub.

Answering questions from participants, students said that they chose to design a robot with the ability to shoot three balls at once versus a turret that fires one ball but rotates. The Robotics Team shared they are working on a climber robot and that this year's robot is smaller than last year's robot because the allowed limit this year is a robot that is 27 inches square.

The Ramageddon team will participate in the first district events in Berrien Springs on March 21 and 22 and in Battle Creek March 28 and 29. State Championships will be held at Saginaw Valley State University April 16 through 18) – if they advance.

South Haven AAUW to hold panel discussion on One Big Beautiful Bill

Christine Vanlandingham

By James Windell

When the "Big Beautiful Bill" was signed into law by President Donald Trump on July 4, 2025, the President and other administration officials described it as the "largest tax break in American history for our nation's seniors."

The Big Beautiful Bill, the nickname for the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (Public Law 119 21), offered the promise that seniors would get more money back in their pockets.

But is this the way it turned out? Are senior citizens any better off? Are they, in fact, worse off?

That's what will be discussed in a panel discussion on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at the Church of the Epiphany in South Haven. The program called "Find Out How the Big Beautiful Bill, HR1, will Affect You" is being presented by the Public Policy Committee of the South Haven AAUW.

According to Amy Nichols, Chair of the Public Policy Committee of South Haven's AAUW, the program evolved out of discussion of how best to explain to the community what is included in the Big Beautiful Bill. "There's both good and bad in the bill," Nichols said, "but it is so convoluted and confusing we thought it would be helpful to bring in some experts to explain it to us."

The two panelists who will be making presentations and taking questions from the audience will be Christine Vanlandingham and Nicole Hudson. Vanlandingham is the CEO of the Region IV Area Agency on Aging (AAA) in Saint Joseph, Michigan, a major nonprofit serving older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers across Southwest and Western Michigan. Vanlandingham is recognized as a prominent regional leader in aging services, health care partnerships, and community advocacy.

Nicole Hudson is Director of the Office of Oversight & Program Coordination, Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS), and her role in the MDHHS places her within the leadership structure that supports statewide public health operations and policy coordination.

Nichols said that Vanlandingham will present on the aspect of the bill that will affect anyone who is disabled or over the age of 55, while Hudson will talk about the effect of the bill on Medicare and Medicaid.

Nichols pointed out that the purpose of AAUW's Public Policy Committee is to address issues at the local, state and national levels to keep the community informed on issues that affect people in the area. She said that by holding the meeting at the Church of the Epiphany it will provide a more intimate setting and people who attend can be relatively certain that their questions will be answered.

"Find Out How the Big Beautiful Bill, HR1, Will Affect You" takes places on Thursday, March 26, 2026, beginning at 6:30 pm at Church of the Epiphany, 410 Erie, South Haven. The program is free of charge. Attendees can submit questions ahead of the meeting at shaauwppc.com

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SH Planning Commission approves revised language in Master Plan

By James Windell

The Master Plan and revisions to the proposed language in the revised Master Plan were back on the table at the South Haven City Planning Commission meeting on March 5, 2026.

The specific task before the Planning Commission was to address objections by the South Haven City Council and approve new language in certain sections of the revised Master Plan that would address those objections.

Prior to the Planning Commission members beginning to tackle proposed changes, South Haven resident Jim Wetlauffer, during the public comments portion of the meeting, urged the Commission to reject any language that "broadens commercial permissions in multifamily residential districts to affirm that special uses are not transferable and to maintain the integrity of the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance." Wetlauffer was specifically referring to the Bunde property at 89 North Shore Drove.

When the agenda item was introduced, Kelly Getman-Dissette, City Zoning Administrator, read over the portions of the Master Plan that had proposed changes. She said that on Page 63 of the plan (Chapter 4, Future Land Use & Zoning Plan), language was added to address point two of the Council objections and "states that residential land use would not be appropriate in areas with environmental contamination without proper remediation, any residential land use must be compatible with the surrounding areas, and maps 9-16 that relate to coastal resilience should be considered in any decision to rezone."

She went on to state that also on Pages 64 and 65 of the plan (Chapter 4, Future Land Use & Zoning Plan), language was added to address point three of the City Council objections and provides additional detail regarding future consideration of low impact commercial uses in the RM-1 zoning district. She added that, "The property at 89 North Shore Drive on the Future Land Use map has been changed to Multi-family/Attached Residential/ Resort." She said that staff removed "commercial land use designation" for that property.

Finally, she pointed out that language was added on Page 64 of the plan (Chapter 4, Future Land Use & Zoning Plan) to address point four of the Council objections. "This states that the property commonly known as 120 Baseline Road has been identified as an area where residential land use is appropriate for single family homes or attached residential dwellings and not resorts," Getman-Dissette said. "Specifically, workforce and missing middle housing would be most appropriate."

She then told the Commission that if the language was satisfactory to everyone a public hearing could be set for the next meeting.

A motion was made to accept the language as proposed by staff in the designated sections of the revised Master Plan. Considerable discussion ensued related to Manufactured Home Communities after which there were several amendments proposed to the original motion. These became very confusing as no one could seemingly keep straight which amendments had been passed and which ones had died due to the lack of support.

Although a vote seemed to approve the proposed language changes, Commissioner Stegeman raised the issue that since Commissioner Hosley lived near 120 Baseline that she should not have voted on the changes related to point four of the City Council objections. The City Attorney offered an opinion that Hosley's vote did not seem to be a conflict of interest, possibly voiding the results of the vote. Nonetheless, Hosley agreed to abstain from the vote. The original vote was reconsidered by a majority of the Commission and new motions were proposed. Finally, with Hosley abstaining, the motions to approve the Master Plan revisions were successful.

The Planning Commission then voted to direct the City staff to arrange a public hearing on the language changes. It is likely that public hearing will take place at the next Planning Commission meeting.

ISD hosts Educational Hero Awards to celebrate educators

Mattawan Consolidated School - Erin Rumery and Nate Engels

South Haven Public Schools - Madeline Finn and Lori Schooley

Lawrence Public Schools - Alma Robles and Tara Lampe

Lawton Community Schools - Amanda Maurer and Diana Michalski

Van Buren Intermediate School District - Antoinette Vaughn and Sarita Collins

Paw Paw Public School District - Samantha Christenson and Isamar Herrera

LAWRENCE - The Van Buren Intermediate School District (VBISD) recently hosted the annual Educational Hero Awards banquet at the VBISD Conference Center, here, bringing together school leaders, educators, and community members from across the county to recognize individuals who make a lasting impact in education.

The event was sponsored by the Van Buren County Association of School Boards in partnership with VBISD and celebrated educators from districts throughout Van Buren County whose dedication and commitment continue to shape the lives of students.

The evening served as a powerful reminder that an educator's influence extends far beyond the classroom. Like waves in the ocean, the dedication of one educator can create ripples that reach far beyond what can be seen, shaping students' futures, strengthening schools, and positively impacting entire communities.

Each honoree represents those waves of influence, commitment, and care that move education forward every day. With districts from across the county represented, the celebration highlighted the extraordinary work taking place in classrooms and schools throughout Van Buren County.

VBISD extends its appreciation to the districts that participated and to the educators who dedicate their lives to supporting students and advancing education for future generations. Their passion and commitment continue to create waves of positive impact that will be felt for years to come.

2026 Educational Heroes include the following:

Bangor Public Schools - Phil Devers and Tina Loomis

Bloomingdale Public Schools - Deb Rodgers and Nicole Meloche

Covert Public Schools - Adriana Saucedo and Gina Valela

Decatur Public Schools - Michelle Botti and Ben Botti

Gobles Public Schools - Lauren Bolhuis and Salvador Robles-Soriano

Hartford Public Schools - Lindsay Blackmer and Nora Aguirre

SH DDA gives go ahead for facade grants

By James Windell

Several downtown South Haven businesses could benefit from a Façade Grant Program which the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) is proposing.

The idea behind the grant program is that by making funds available to businesses in the downtown district the unique character and attractive renovation of the outside of some businesses could make the buildings more appealing to prospective tenants and increase business.

At their regular meeting on March 4, 2026, the DDA voted to proceed with plans to initiate the Façade Grant Program after reviewing a draft of the program.

The proposed grant would be available to property owners within the DDA district, who have a business in the district, and who are up to date on all property taxes. There would be a 50% matching component to the grant and funds could be used to update either front or rear facades of the building. The grant program would be under the auspices of the DDA.

Assistant City Manager Michael Landis, filling in for DDA Director Sue Brock, told the members of the DDA that City staff propose that grant amounts for front façades would range up to $20,000, while projects involving rear façades could receive up to $10,000.

It was also proposed that eligible façade work would include projects that open building exteriors, such as adding windows, removing infill, replacing doors with something transparent, adding exterior lighting, and cleaning the façade. It was also stated that priority for grants would go to vacant properties, ground floor improvements, elements that improve retail visibility or projects that embrace downtown design best practices.

After discussion and approval, the grant program proposal will be refined and brought back to the DDA for final approval. It is expected that applications may be submitted beginning July 1, 2026, after the DDA has fully approved the program.

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VFW Post 6248 makes donation to Goldstar Mothers

VFW Post 6248, Decatur recently presented a donation of more than $8,0000 to the Goldstar Mothers Memorial in Paw Paw. Donations are currently being sought to complete the memorial. *Photo courtesy/ VFW Post 6248*

SHAES Cadet Program fosters firefighters

By James Windell

It seems entirely fitting that Ayden Quinn should have been one of the first cadets in the SHAES Cadets Program. And that he will become the first cadet to become a SHAES firefighter.

"I became a cadet when I was 15," Ayden Quinn, who will turn 18 this week, says about his experiences as a cadet, "and the reason I joined is because my family has been in the fire service for many years."

Quinn says his father, Timothy Quinn, has been a "huge role model" for him and so was his grandfather Don Quinn. Timothy Quinn is an 18-year veteran and a Lieutenant for SHAES. His grandfather retired in 2015, but is a Life Member of SHAES.

Because his dad was at the station a lot when Ayden was growing up, Ayden says he has been around the station "running calls with them" since he was 6 years old. "It was back then that I decided I wanted to be just like them," he says.

Not everyone grew up in a household like Quinn did. Firefighting is usually not on the radar of most kids these days when they think about their career choices. Which is why Brandon Hinz, Executive Director of South Haven Area Emergency Services (SHAES), created the Cadets Program in 2022.

"We started looking at how we were recruiting firefighters," Hinz said in a recent interview in his office. "We've been going into schools and trying to recruit, but we thought a good way to do that was through a cadet program. The idea is to bring them into the fire station while they're still in high school and let them get their feet wet, get a chance to know the people and get to know the department."

After learning how other cadet programs worked and designing their own program, the first cadets came into the program in 2024. Ayden Quinn was one of the original cadets. Now there are eight cadets.

"They all came in as high school students," Hinz explains, "and six of them are currently attending or have attended the Van Buren Intermediate School District's fire science program. Some are also taking the EMS program."

He says that cadets can set their own time as to when they will be at the fire station. "Their role is to help out at events and are supervised by paid on call members of SHAES," Hinz says. "Cadets aren't allowed to respond directly to fires, but if they are here and they have their gear, they are allowed to hop on a truck and respond to a fire. But they are observation only; we never allow them to be in any danger."

For Ayden Quinn, the experience of being a SHAES Cadet has been invaluable.

"Last year I took the fire academy training," he says, "and I have talked to many of my friends and fellow classmates and encouraged them to join the fire department. But the things I've learned from the Cadet Program is that the fire department isn't always about just helping out. It's also about the many friends I've made and the countless people I've helped on their worst day."

Quinn took the Fire Science Academy training last year at Van Buren Tech in Lawrence, Michigan. "The class was difficult at times and mentally exhausting, but if you put the work in you'll be just fine," Quinn says. It was just one free training that cadets can take. Because of the training he's had, when he turns 18 he will be a certified firefighter in the state of Michigan. "That means I can work at any department in Michigan, but that goes for all cadets who get certified in Michigan," he says.

Cadet Scott Ritche Staffing Accountability board

Once he turns 18, he will have the qualifications necessary to join SHAES. "My future plans now are to continue being a firefighter and helping my community out as much as I can," he says.

For more information about the SHAES Cadet Program, students can contact SHAES Administrative Assistant Anne Wildey at Awildey@shaes.org or at 269-637-5151.

Indivisible Paw Paw celebrates one-year of protests with third No Kings rally

PAW PAW - Mari Gras may be over in New Orleans, but in Paw Paw the local Indivisible group will be celebrating its one-year anniversary of hosting peaceful protests at the same time joining millions of Americans in an organized day of action for the third No Kings event March 28.

"Every day we are reminded of the importance of what this nation was founded upon – enduring principles of equality, liberty, and self-governance, enshrined in documents like the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution," said a spokesperson for Indivisible Paw Paw. "These ideals - including individual rights, the rule of law, and consent of the governed - are vital because they established a government designed to protect freedom, promote opportunity, and prevent tyranny."

The IPP spokesperson explained, "We chose the Mardi Gras theme to have this uplifting event for people who are feeling overwhelmed by constant news from the White House. Given that this is a mid-term election year, we also aim to provide the public with accurate information regarding the candidates seeking political office at both the state and national levels."

The rally will begin at 10 a.m. at the Maple Lake Amphitheatre with music provided by The Great Lakes Brass, a New Orleans-style second line brass band. Speaking briefly at the event will be Michigan Sen. Sean McCann-D and Diop Harris, both of whom are vying for the 4th District U.S. Congressional seat; and Daniel Oropeza with the United Farm Workers Foundation.

Then, the group will head through downtown Paw Paw led by The Great Lakes Brass, where event members can display protest signs.

Indivisible Paw Paw is a non-partisan, non-violent local organization that is a part of the national Indivisible, a movement driven by a vision of a real democracy of, by, and for the people. The Indivisible movement is a network of thousands of local groups and millions of activists across every state working to build an inclusive democracy by fighting for bold, progressive policies and creating lasting grassroots power.

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Przygocki files for County Commission

PAW PAW - Josh Przygocki announced on Monday, March 16, his candidacy for Van Buren County Commissioner, District 5, in the 2026 election. The seat became vacant following the passing of longtime Commissioner Randall "Randy" Peat.

"Randy Peat served this community with dedication, and he left big shoes to fill. I've spent my career solving problems for people, whether that was helping families cut through red tape at the state level, keeping Paw Paw moving forward during COVID, or making sure someone's call got returned and their voice was heard. Our community deserves a commissioner who brings that same energy and work ethic every single day."

Przygocki has built his career in Paw Paw and brings a combination of local government and private-sector experience to the race. He previously served on the Paw Paw Village Council during the COVID-19 pandemic, where he focused on advocating for businesses and residents under the burden of COVID-19, promoted further growth and opportunity in the community, and responsibly investing in village infrastructure. He also serves as District Director for Michigan Senate Republican Leader Aric Nesbitt, helping residents navigate state government and ensuring their priorities are heard in Lansing.

In 2024, Przygocki started his own small business in Van Buren County. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Hillsdale College and earned a degree in Politics with a minor in Biology. He's also a graduate of the Michigan Political Leadership Program from Michigan State University.

His campaign will focus on three priorities for Van Buren County:

Economic Growth - Van Buren County needs an environment where small businesses can thrive, employers can find workers, and young families can afford to put down roots. Przygocki will work to cut red tape, attract investment, and make sure the county is a place where the next generation can live, work, and raise their families.

Public safety - From sheriff's department funding to the drug crisis hitting small communities across Michigan, keeping families safe is a core responsibility of county government. Przygocki will prioritize making sure law enforcement has the resources and support to protect our neighborhoods.

Protecting taxpayers - Every dollar the county spends comes out of a neighbor's pocket. Przygocki will be a watchdog for taxpayers, fighting to keep county spending disciplined and making sure residents aren't asked to pay more without seeing results.

Przygocki has earned broad support from those who know our community best: Van Buren Treasurer Trisha Nesbitt, former State Senator Tonya Schuitmaker, State Representative Pauline Wendzel, and Senate Republican Leader Aric Nesbitt have all endorsed his campaign to serve as Van Buren County's next county commissioner.

"My last name might be hard to pronounce, but my values are easy to understand. I grew up working in my family's restaurant, bussing tables, washing dishes, doing whatever needed to be done. That's still how I approach things. County government is budgets, roads, public safety, and services people count on every day. I look forward to meeting residents in the community, knocking on their doors, and earning their support one conversation at a time."

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VIEWPOINT

Speculators, not war are driving gas prices higher

MIKE'S MUSINGS

MIKE WILCOX ■ PUBLISHER ■

Every time Americans pull up to the pump, they're told the same story: gas prices are high because of global supply problems, geopolitical tensions, or refinery issues. Those factors certainly play a role. For instance the war with Iran has tightened worldwide supplies, but in reality here in America we get very little oil from Iran.

But there is another major force quietly pushing prices upward—speculators and commodity traders betting on the price of oil.

The price of gasoline in the United States is closely tied to the global price of crude oil, particularly benchmarks like West Texas Intermediate and Brent Crude. What many people don't realize is that these prices are not determined solely by how much oil is actually being produced or consumed. They are also heavily influenced by financial markets where traders buy and sell oil futures contracts—often with no intention of ever taking delivery of a single barrel.

These trades take place on exchanges such as the New York Mercantile Exchange, where billions of dollars move every day as investors speculate on where oil prices might go next. Hedge funds, large banks, and investment firms can pour enormous sums into these markets, driving prices up simply through betting activity. And when tensions breakout in the Middle East, you can bet investors push the price of oil upwards.

In theory, futures markets help stabilize prices by allowing producers and refiners to hedge against risk. In reality, the volume of speculative trading now dwarfs the amount of oil changing hands in the physical world. When investors believe oil prices will rise, they pile into the market, bidding up contracts. That higher paper price quickly filters down to the gasoline pump—even if actual supply hasn't changed much.

The result is a system where American consumers are paying prices influenced as much by Wall Street as by oil wells.

Consider this: global oil production often fluctuates only modestly, yet gasoline prices can swing wildly in a matter of weeks. A refinery outage or tensions in the Middle East might justify a temporary bump. But the magnitude of some price, like the hikes we are experiencing, spikes suggests something else is happening speculators amplifying every piece of news into a profit opportunity.

And because oil is traded globally, speculation doesn't just affect investors. It affects commuters, small businesses, truck drivers, and families trying to balance household budgets. I would say most all consumer goods are affected by the price of oil, hence we pay higher prices.

The irony is that the United States is now one of the world's largest energy producers. Thanks to domestic drilling and shale production, the country pumps millions of barrels per day. Yet Americans are still exposed to volatile prices driven by international markets and financial speculation.

Some policymakers have raised concerns before. The Commodity Futures Trading Commission, which regulates commodity markets, has periodically investigated excessive speculation and market manipulation. But enforcement and oversight have often lagged behind the explosion of financial trading in energy markets.

If we want more stable and fair fuel prices, policymakers should revisit limits on speculative positions in oil futures markets. Greater transparency and stricter oversight could help ensure these markets serve their original purpose—helping manage risk—not inflating costs for everyday Americans.

Gasoline is not a luxury. It is a necessity for millions of people who rely on their vehicles to get to work, take their kids to school, and keep businesses running.

When speculation adds dollars—not cents—to the price of a tank of gas, it's fair to ask whether the system is serving the public or simply enriching those betting on the next price spike.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Reader blames "Angry White Liberals"

Dear Editor.

It has been quite a telling month for the new Democrats. Michigan's 4th District House Representative Democrat Karen Whitsett came to the realization her Christian faith is incompatible with the current Democrat Party stances. "For me, it is impossible to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ while remaining a member of the Democratic Party as it exists today. I cannot reconcile that platform with Scripture," State Rep. Karen Whitsett told a local news outlet.

Michigan Democrat Party Chair Curtis Hertel celebrated Whitsett's departure with "good riddance." That about says it all. "… God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Bible… These are not code words for MAGA," Whitsett wrote, referring to the Make America Great Again movement. "The triune God isn't interested in a political party. I pray you don't miss your chance to know Him better, simply because you have Trump Derangement Syndrome (TDS). Seriously! It would be a shame if you went to hell for eternal life because of something so ridiculous as that."

Then on March 4th our U.S. House of Representatives failed to pass Republican Nancy Mace's House Resolution 1100 that would have publicly released the records of sexual harassment complaints against U.S. House members. This resolution not only released the names of those Representatives involved with the harassment complaints but all of the investigative materials pertaining to the slush funds and tax dollars used to confidentially settle these complaints. Disappointingly the vote failed 357-65.

Sadly, both Republicans and Democrats voted against the release of this information, but in true hypocritical fashion 78 female Democrats ranting for the release of the Epstein files voted against H.R. 1100. This only confirms the fake outrage of the new Democrats regarding the release of the Epstein files and substantiates that the baseless claims against President Trump regarding Epstein are nothing more than TDS.

These are the same new Democrats justifying men sharing bathrooms and locker rooms with women and little girls while grooming 14-year-old children to mutilate their bodies in the name of sexual liberation. They ignore the murdered, raped and sexually assaulted women and children as well as the tens of thousands of trafficked victims at the hands of illegal immigrants while bemoaning the deportation or imprisonment of these very same monsters. And just this last week, the new Democrats temporarily dropped they're attempt to legalize prostitution in Colorado. It is impossible to protect children from sex trafficking where prostitution is legal, this is the very epitome of government sanctioned slavery.

The new Democrats have lost the right to say they are protecting children. With no moral compass the left uses women, children and all others as pawns in their obsession to secularize our Republic, the final baston of Christian liberty on earth.

If it wasn't such a serious matter for the very survival of our Republic, the left's tirades against the Save Act border on comedic. Apparently the only American citizens against the Save Act are Angry White Liberals. Every other demographic in our nation (over 80% in every recognized poll) strongly believes that in order to vote in an American election it should be a requirement to produce government issued identification to confirm American citizenship. The vast majority of Republican and Democrat women and men across all ethnicities in our nation support this election safeguard with the exception of the Angry White Liberals.

They can't logically enumerate their objections, other than the pathetic claim of racism and misogyny. Ironically those minorities the new Democrats claim to be protecting don't support the Left's efforts. Out of their bitterness the left exhibits kneejerk opposition to not only anything Trump related but will take any opportunity to claim victimhood while aligning themselves with authentic victims. One is almost embarrassed for them that they are so short sighted to recognize that it's only Angry White Liberals that lack the intellect and or ethical integrity to adhere to the very simple requirements of the Save Act.

After well over a half century, there is a too-slow awakening throughout the ethnic communities in America that liberals are not now, nor have they ever been, sincerely concerned with anything but promoting their own anti-American agenda. At the moment I'm too lazy to get up and go through my copy of The Autobiography of Malcom X to provide exact dates, but at some point, in the 50's or 60's he said two things that strike a chord at this time: "In this crooked game of politics, white liberals are the most deceitful of all". And two days prior to his assassination he said "The Democrats are playing you for a political chump and if you vote for them, not only are you a CHUMP, you are a traitor to your race."

I can already hear the wailing and gnashing of teeth by the small but VERY vocal local Angry White Liberals. As they can never truthfully articulate a conversation, I'm certain they'll again resort to the same old racist and misogynist labels. But as I said some time ago, when liberals call someone names its no different than a six-year-old's tantrum and no more significant.

John R. Young

OBITUARIES

Maxine Gayle Carlson

Maxine Gayle Carlson, 71, of Greensburg, Indiana, passed away on December 25, 2025. She was born on September 13, 1954, in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the daughter of Gene and Donna Garrod Avery.

Maxine was a graduate of Hartford Public School in Hartford, Michigan. On March 18, 1978, Maxine married Gary Carlson, and together they shared many years of love and companionship. They were blessed with one son, Jeff, who was a great joy in her life. She dedicated over 37 years of service as a secretary at Lawrence Public School in Lawrence, Michigan. She enjoyed being around the students at the school, finding joy in brightening their days. During her career, she was grateful for the opportunity to work alongside her mother for several years.

She was a faithful member of Hartford Bible Church in Hartford, Michigan.

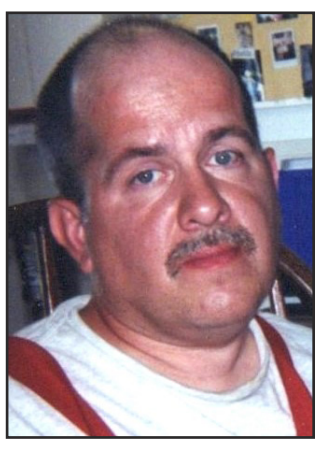
Maxine had a quiet, gentle spirit and brought a sense of peaceful comfort to those who knew her. She loved reading, camping, spending time with her family, and playing cards with friends alongside her husband, Gary. She also loved going to the theater to watch Christian concerts. Maxine deeply loved her family and cherished the impact they had on her life.

Maxine will be remembered for her kindness, her devotion to her family, and the quiet warmth she shared with everyone around her.

Survivors include her husband, Gary Carlson, of Greensburg, son, Jeff Carlson of Greensburg; grandsons, Caison Carlson, Amden Carlson and Pryor Carlson of Greensburg; brother, Larry (Carol) Avery; sister in laws, Gail Melville of South Bend, Indiana and Gwen Parrish of Port St. Lucie, Florida; and brother-in-law, Gregg (Michelle) Carlson in South Haven, Michigan; several nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews. She was preceded in death by her parents, Gene and Donna Avery.

A celebration of life service was held on Saturday February 21st in Greensburg, Indiana. A Grave side funeral will be held on March 28th, 2026 at 1:00pm. At The Maple Hill Cemetery in Hartford. Her Brother Larry Avery will be officiating

Paul Mitchel Palasinski



Paul Mitchel Palasinski, 70, of Paw Paw, passed away peacefully, Friday, March 6, 2026, at Medilodge of Westwood, Kalamazoo. He was born July 11, 1955, in Paw Paw, Michigan, the son of Stanley Palasinski and Helen (Freer) Palasinski.

He is survived by his three brothers, Richard (Beth) Palsinski, Peter (Betsy) Palasinski and Stanley Palasinski, Jr.; nieces, Carrie (Dave) Miles and Annie (Billy) Stone; five great-nieces and nephews and many cousins.

Paul is preceded in passing by his parents.

Family and friends are invited to visit on Friday, March 13, from noon until 2 p.m. at Adams Funeral Home, 502 W. Michigan Ave., Paw Paw. A funeral service will begin at 2 p.m. with Fr. Dave Pinto officiating. Paul will be laid to rest at Saint Mary Cemetery, Paw Paw, immediately following.

Share a memory or sign the online guestbook at adamspawpaw.com

Martha Helen Shoemaker

Martha Helen Shoemaker passed to eternity on Thursday, March 12, 2026. She was born Martha Rickli on March 19, 1923, in Watson, Michigan, the second daughter of Jacob Rickli and Anna (Siegfried) Rickli.

Martha graduated from Martin High School in 1941. While in high school she met her future husband, Jesse Charles Shoemaker, known as Chuck. While he served in the army, she supported herself working jobs in different cities while waiting for him to return home. Days after he was discharged, Martha and Chuck were married on Jan. 11, 1946, a union in love they each treasured every day. The two settled in Martin, where Chuck farmed with his brothers. Martha and Chuck raised three children, Tom, Jerry, and Mary. Throughout her life Martha was devoted to Chuck and caring for their children and other family members. Occasionally, she worked on the family farm, but most of her time was spent supporting her family and her children's many activities.

Martha and Chuck were longtime members of the Martin United Methodist Church where she taught Sunday School classes. Cooking, knitting, and crocheting were among her favorite pastimes, and she excelled at each of them. Martha freely shared her handiwork and delicious dishes to the delight of the many who received them.

Once retired from farming, Martha and Chuck moved to Kalamazoo. They enjoyed time just being together and visiting family and friends as well as traveling throughout the United States and Europe. In retirement, both volunteered at The Discovery Shop operated by the American Cancer Society. They were often seen strolling hand in hand as the love they shared grew even stronger throughout their years.

Martha was a loving person, nurturing her family, treasuring her marriage, giving back to community and church, and spreading happiness and compassion wherever she went. Even in her later days of life at Maple Lake Assisted Living, where she was known as Miss Martha, she was recognized for her smiles and hugs freely offered to caregivers and residents.

Martha was preceded in death by her husband, Chuck (Jesse Charles) Shoemaker; parents, Jacob and Anna Rickli; son, Jerry Charles Shoemaker; siblings, Anne Wells, Dorothy Levett, Alice McCaffery, and Walter Rickli.

Surviving are son, Thomas Shoemaker (Tonda Boothby) of Paw Paw, MI; daughter, Mary Burpee (Tim Burpee) of Snohomish, WA; and daughter-in-law, Deborah Shoemaker of Mason, MI; siblings, Jacob Rickli of Kalamazoo, James Rickli of Paw Paw, and Norma Cribbs of Rochester; grandchildren, Nicholas Burpee and Jeffrey Burpee of Snohomish, WA; Alison (Shoemaker) Palmer of Chantilly, VA; Benjamin Shoemaker of Holt, MI; Jesse Boothby Shoemaker of Benton Harbor, Lexis (Boothby-Shoemaker) Fath of Paw Paw, and Dr. Wyatt Boothby-Shoemaker of Oak Park; 13 great-grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild.

Visitation will be held at the Paw Paw Presbyterian Church, 120 Pine St., Paw Paw, on Friday, March 20 from 5 until 8 p.m. A celebration of Martha's life will also be held at the Presbyterian Church on Saturday, March 21, with visitation at 10 a.m. and the service, officiated by the Rev. Gail Monsma of the Presbyterian Church and the Rev. Margaret Stoken of the Martin United Methodist Church, beginning at 11 a.m., followed by a luncheon.

Share a memory or sign the online guestbook at adamspawpaw.com

Driver faces charges after single vehicle crash

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

ANTWERP TOWNSHIP - A 58-year-old Plainwell man arrested March 4, following a high-speed chase in Antwerp Township, faces several charges, according to a press release from the Van Buren County Sheriff's Office.

Van Buren County Sheriff Daniel Abbott reported that a Van Buren County Sheriff's deputy attempted to perform a traffic stop on a vehicle for a motor vehicle code violation. The vehicle fled westbound on Red Arrow Highway at speeds around 80 mph. The vehicle turned north onto County Road 652 before turning into a subdivision. The vehicle dropped speeds and continued through the subdivision at speeds under 10 mph before returning to County Road 652 and coming to a stop.

Sheriff Abbott said the driver was apprehended without further incident. A search of the driver and vehicle led to the seizure of a large amount of methamphetamine, as well as packaging materials and scales. The driver was subsequently transported to the Van Buren County Jail on charges of fleeing and eluding, possession with intent to deliver methamphetamine, driving while license suspended and no insurance on a motor vehicle.

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PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY WILCOX NEWSPAPERS, LLC
PO Box 189, Allegan, MI 49010
(269) 657-3072 • wilcoxnewspapers.com

Publisher - Mike Wilcox
Graphics- Liz LaValle
Reporter - Paul Garrod & James Windell
IT - Jordan Wilcox

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Lawton Village Council pays tribute to Lawton news publication

By Paul Garrod
Staff Writer
news4garrod@gmail.com

LAWTON - The Lawton Village Council on March 10, paid tribute to a Lawton news publication that recently marked 25 years of service to the village.

Al Lueder, and his late wife, Nancy, were recognized by the village council for 25 years of service to the village through the Lawton Free Reader. Council members approved a resolution that declared March 10, 2026, as Al and Nancy Lueder Day in the Village of Lawton.

During Citizen's Comments, Van Buren County Commissioner Tina Leary said the county commissioner's Public Health Subcommittee recently announced the county health department will have new hours, Monday through Thursday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Fridays, 8 a.m. to noon. Dental services will remain full-time. She also added that the county offers dental benefits for veterans.

The village council also approved proposed ZBA bylaws. Village Council President Josh Appleby brought the proposed ZBA bylaws to the floor for discussion. These bylaws will bring the village in line with the RRC program and provide written streamlined guidelines for the village council to work from.

The village council also approved a proposed Public Participation plan. This is another area that the village needs to have done to have the RRC designation.

The council approved a new village police department sergeant's position. department to the floor for discussion. This new position would allow for another officer to take over while the police chief is out. Currently, the village does not have this designation. Village council members said this will help during the transition period while the village hires a new chief as well. Lawton Village Manager Todd Hackenberg will also get LEIN and CJIS certifications in order that he may go into the office if something does happen.

The village council said this will allow someone capable of maintaining the department when the police chief is out of the office, as well as helping to maintain integrity for things that the police chief does not have time to do.

The council also approved several new DPW policies written by Village Manager Hackenberg. These policies cover a variety of topics.

Village Manager Hackenberg said spring clean-up will be held May 11-16. Hours for spring cleanup will be 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8 a.m. to noon, on Saturday.

Lawton Village Chief of Police Greg Cordes submitted his letter of resignation on Feb. 10. Cordes said he still has a few goals that he would like to accomplish at Lawton and proposed he would like to use his vacation time and remain as an interim police chief to keep things running and will stay on working two days per week.

Cordes expressed his thanks to everyone for his time at Lawton during the past two and a half years. He said he hopes that he leaves the police department in a better place than when he arrived.

SHHS junior swimmer places fifth in state

South Haven High School swimmers will compete in eight events at the MHSAA Division 3 State Championships to be held March 13-14 at the Holland Aquatic Center.

Zander Duncan has qualified in the 50 freestyle, 100 backstroke, 100 butterfly and 500 freestyle while Calvin Dissette can compete in the 100 breaststroke, 200 individual medley and 500 freestyle.

The Rams have also qualified in the 200 freestyle relay and 200 medley relay. Joining Zander Duncan and Calvin Dissette will be Carson Dissette and Julius Filbrandt.

Two Day Book Sale at VBDL Lawrence Branch Library

LAWRENCE - Blue and Bingo will visit VBDL Lawrence on Saturday, March 21, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. All are welcome to stop by to say "hi" and get a photo.

The Friends of the Lawrence Library will host a two-day Book Sale, Friday, March 20, from noon to 4 p.m. and Saturday, March 21, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at VBDL Lawrence Branch Library, 212 N. Paw Paw St., Lawrence.

For information about the sale, call (269) 674-3200.

Van Buren District Library is headquartered in Decatur with branches in Bangor, Bloomingdale, Covert, Decatur, Gobles, Lawrence and Mattawan.

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• AUCTION •

ID STORAGE 75577 14th Ave., South Haven MI 49090. Auction of units. #32 M.Jackson, #33 J.Green, #58 T. Sullivan &; #91 A.McNair &; S.Phillips. As is where is Sunday March 29 th at 10:00 am.

ALL SECURE SELF STORAGE will hold sale of abandoned property at a public sale pursuant in 540.521-570.527: Public **Auction: 3/31/2026 at or after 9:30a.m. EST: 37404 W Red Arrow Highway Paw Paw:** Chris Beeman, 10; Justin Wellington, 15; Kenneth Thompson, 88; Gail Johnson, 100/101; Keith Allen, 217.

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Newell set for spring track, fall football

Ben Newell will be a senior for next fall's Paw Paw football team.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

PAW PAW — Ben Newell has one year left of football eligibility for Paw Paw football in the fall and is eager to get back to the gridiron.

He played linebacker and tight end for the Red Wolves.

"I had a pretty consistent season," he said. "But I have to thank my line. They did a lot for me this year."

Bell also did a lot for Paw Paw. He had 10 tackles for losses during the season plus a sack.

Newell had a strong first full varsity season. He fifth quartered during his varsity year, going between the JV and varsity teams.

Newell was a blocking tight end for Paw Paw.

On the pass plays, "I did a good job of blocking pretty well." he said. "I kept my quarterback protected."

PawPaw started out the season at 0-3 but won six straight to make the playoffs.

"I think the season went pretty well," Newell said. "I think our biggest win was against Vicksburg. Everyone had hyped them up pretty well. We dominated them this year (in a 42-6 win)."

Newell had five solo tackles and six assists in that game.

As for next year's team, "I think we're going to be pretty solid. There's a lot of guys putting in the work already," Newell said.

Newell has been a sprinter on the track team and indicated this year he would also try being a thrower.

Lawton senior having strong three-sport season

Rockey Karsen was an inside linebacker and tight end for the Lawton football team.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

LAWTON — Rocky Karsen will have fond memories of his senior season of sports at Lawton.

Karsen is a powerlifter and will be a track athlete this spring.

For the fall, he was an excellent inside linebacker and tight end for the football team and started both ways.

As a linebacker, "I think my strengths would be reading the play and reacting anc going to the ball," Karsen said.

He remembers getting a sack against Constantine in the first round of the playoffs on a key third-down play.

As a tight end, Karsen was especially utilized as a key blocker. He also caught an 11-yard pass. Lawton's offense was basically run-oriented.

Lawton had an 8-3 football season and lost in the district finals.

"We did good," Karsen said. "We had some key injuries of guys who went down. If they were healthy we could have gone further than we did. Overall, we had a good season"

It was Karsen's second varsity football season.

He said football was his favorite of his three sports.

South Haven girls pick up honors

Congratulations to Kylee Killeen (pictured left) and Daisy Jackson (pictured right) for being selected 1st team All Division and Ellie Wood for being selected All Division Honorable Mention. They all had outstanding seasons.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

SOUTH HAVEN —South Haven girls basketball won back-to-back SAC Lakeshore titles this season, going 10-0 in conference.

Awards and per game averages for coach Joey Weaver's team were as follows:

1st Team All-conference SAC Lakeshore

Ly'Nique Cunningham (junior) - 24 pts, 5.7 rebs, 2.7 assists, 5.9 stls.

Nevaeh Cooper - (senior) 4.7 pts, 5.9 rebs

Honorable mention All-Conference SAC Lakeshore

Charlotte Grzybowski (senior) - 3 pts, 2 rebs.

Madi Duda (sophomore) - 4.1 pts, 4 rebs, 2 stls.

Ja'Niyah Langston (sophomore) - 'would be all-conference, Weaver said, 'but she missed multiple conference games due to injury. Once she returned, she was a valuable part as the team's center at six points and 4.8 rebounds.

Acosta excels for Bloomingdale sports

Nayeli Acosta had a strong season as a blocker for Bloomingdale.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

BLOOMINGDALE — Nayeli Acosta has had a fun sports season at Bloomingdale as a senior.

She was in varsity volleyball two years as a middle blocker. She has played the position four years including two years on JV. She has played the same position.

To be an effective middle blocker, "the key is to definitely have a good mindset and always stay confident in yourself," Acosta said.

As a hitter,"I place very well. I'm really good when it comes to putting the ball down and placing it in opposing teams' faces," she said. "I'd like to think I have a pretty strong hit. I'm able to hit the really sharp corners."

Bloomingdale's team "definitely had a year of growth," she said. "It went well. We made it to the district finals. I think this was a better team compared to last year. We wanted it better as a team this year I think we played more as a team this year.

"I think I improved a lot, especially from where I started. I would like to think I really came a very long way. I improved a lot."

A key moment for the team was against Coloma in the district semifinals.

"We swept them," Acosta said. "We played very smart that game. We fought hard that game. It was the most memorable win we had."

Volleyball was her main sport. She was considering playing soccer this spring.

"I love volleyball overall," Acosta said. "I like how competitive it gets, especially in my position and having to block and hit. I love how aggressive and competitive I have to be at the net. As a sport, I love it."'

Baima having strong sports season for Mattawan

Larkin Baima has been a three-sport athlete at Mattawan.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

MATTAWAN — Larkin Baima will have fond memories for a long time of her senior season of sports at Mattawan.

She played basketball for Mattawan during the winter and was planning on soccer this spring.

On volleyball, Baima was a middle blocker/rightside hitter. She spent four years on the varsity and played the same position every year.

"I typically play in the middle," she said.

Baima said this was her another good year for her. Her strength on the floor "is that I see the court very well and I try to look for open spots."

Blocking was a specialty. The key to being an effective blocker, Baima said, was "staying on my toes, be ready to stop the ball from coming over to the other side at all times."

Mattawan won another district title in the fall.

"It felt awesome, she said. "I remember winning it my sophomore year and it was really cool, but especially this year being a senior meant a lot. For the young girls on the team, it meant a lot. It was a full team effort."

Baima was a server and had a lot of aces for the Wildcats.

"The key is serving between two passers because it makes then decide who is going to for the ball," she said, adding the team exceeded its expectations especially considering six girls graduated from last year's team.

Bloomingdale athlete set for soccer

Yaritza Perales plays soccer and volleyball for Bloomingdale.

By John Raffel
Correspondent

BLOOMINGDALE — Yaritza Perales is a senior athlete at Bloomingdale who has made a mark on the sports program.

She was set to play soccer this spring as a striker. Perales played two seasons of Bloomgdale volleyball and was a setter. She played all four years of high school as a setter.

"In middle school, I was not a setter," she said.

When Perales became a setter as a high school, it was the coach's decision to put her there.

"I was really nervous," she said. "I know the setter position is a real important position. I was very nervous. The first few times it was fine. I think I got comfortably used to it right away."

Perales was able to make a smooth transition from JV to varsity.

"The class of 2024 was my sophomore year and most of the team was seniors so everything was fresh for us," she said adding to be a good setter is "always having a good attitude and working on setting difficult balls, a lot of placement and smart thinking."

From her junior to senior season "I improved quite a lot like in attitude and keeping my team together," Perales said. "I would stay after practice and try to give my hitters time so we could have great chemistry and try to build that chemistry. It took a lot of practice."

Perales felt she did a good job on giving her hitters a good set.

To be a good server and getting an ace "was looking at the court before you serve and seeing where the open space is. You know where to place it," she said.

Mattawan wrestlers wrap up season

By John Raffel
Correspondent

MATTAWAN — Mattawan wrapped up the state tournament with Pedro Carcedo, its exchange student, finishing the season as a Division 1 state qualifier.

"That's extremely impressive considering he just learned the sport of wrestling a few months ago." Coach Nico Lopez said.

For all-conference honors on the boys side:

-Zack Miller – 2nd Team All-Conference

-Pedro Carcedo – Honorable Mention All-Conference

For the girls team:

-Haylee Schoonbeck – Conference Champion and Regional Qualifier.

Other notable accomplishments this season:

Remi Schoonbeck – Regional Qualifier as a freshman.

Torsten Carlson – Regional Qualifier as a freshman.

Pedro Carcedo – Regional Qualifier/

"We had 2 senior wrestlers achieve 100 wins in their career," Lopez said. "They were Zack Miller and Bubbie Schoonbeck. We are incredibly proud of the growth and accomplishments of these athletes this season."

Mattawan cheerleaders issue team awards

By John Raffel

Mattawan cheer coach Nicole Plumb has announced her 2025-26 team awards.

Positive Mental Attitude: Marissa Rutledge,

Best Energy: Teagan Cassada.

Most Inspiring: Annie Headaphol.

True Loyalty: Makena Watson and Ashley Smith.

Most Valuable Player Round 1: Ashley Smith.

Most Valuable Player Round 2: Aubrey Milner & Makena Watson.

Most Valuable Player Round 3: Jenna Kimberly.

All About Heart: Alyssa Wheadon & Addison May.

All Conference:

Marissa Rutledge, Teagan Cassada, Molly Vaughn, Hailey Beckham. Honorable mention: Annaliese Headaphol

Final standings for the SMAC conference were No. 3, and for the District finals (first year D1 team) finished eighth out of 14 (second best score out of the West side teams competing).

"They improved scores over 90 points this season, and finished on a season high of nearly 703 points," Plume said. "Its incredible for a first year Division I school.

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=• PUBLIC NOTICE •=

Porter Township
Van Buren County
88040 M-40 Lawton, MI 49065
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 11, 2026

Supervisor Oxley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members present – Oxley, Bitely, Nesbitt, Packer, and Smith. Also present – Attorney Moraitis and eight guests.

- Motion by Packer with support by Bitely to approve the minutes of the regular meeting on January 14, 2026. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Bitely with support by Packer to approve the Treasurer's report subject to audit. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Packer with support by Bitely to approve the bills as presented. Roll call vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Nesbitt with support by Bitely to approve Township to cover inspection fees on Ag Exempt buildings, where permit is not required and fees not collected, at a rate of $67.50 per inspection. Roll call vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Packer with support by Bitely to approve Supervisor Oxley's recommendation to reappoint Greg Brucks, Andrew Nesbitt, and Tonya Willis to the Planning Commission for 3-year terms. Voice call vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Nesbitt with support by Packer to approve Supervisor Oxley's recommendation to reappoint Robert Angle, Harold Laski, and Daniel Price, with alternate Robert Blum, to the Zoning Board of Appeals for a 3-year term. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Packer with support by Smith to approve Supervisor Oxley's recommendation to reappoint Robert Camfield, Gary Mencl, and Norman Smith to the Construction Board of Appeals for a 2-year term. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Smith with support by Packer to approve office renovations – furniture, installation, floor and paint, at a cost not to exceed $45,000. Roll call vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Nesbitt with support by Packer to approve Supervisor Oxley's recommendation to terminate Zoning Solutions LLC contract for ordinance enforcement, effective immediately. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.
- Motion by Packer with support by Bitely to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 pm. Voice vote – all yes. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Heather Smith
Porter Township Clerk

STATE OF MICHIGAN 36th CIRCUIT COURT – Van Buren County, 212 E. Paw Paw Street, Paw Paw, MI 49079; 269-657-8200. To: LEONIDES ALFONSO-PEREZ In Re: MARICELA ARENAS-AGUSTIN v. LEONIDES ALFONSO-PEREZ. Case No. 25-075219-DC. Take Notice: A Request for Default Entry was filed on December 18, 2025, requesting the clerk to enter the default of Defendant for failure to plead or otherwise defend as provided by law and stating that the Defendant is not an infant or incompetent person or in the military service. The clerk approved the default entry on December 18, 2025, stating that the default of the Defendant for failure to plead or otherwise defend is entered. A Motion for Entry of Default Judgment was then filed on February 11, 2026, requesting the court to grant Plaintiff sole legal and physical custody of the minor children of the parties, award Defendant no parenting time, and award child support accordingly. A hearing will be held on March 25, 2026, at 1:30 pm before a referee of the Friend of the Court in reference to the Motion for Entry of Default Judgment: Virtual Room A, Meeting ID: 292 853 1976. The result of a failure to answer or appear may be to bar or affect the person's interest in the matter.

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Andrew J Suarez; Atty: Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C. - Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C.; 1st Pub: 3/19/2026; Atty File #: 25MI00512-1; Insurer: (unknown)
FORECLOSURE NOTICE
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 01:00 PM, April 16, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Default has been made in the conditions of a certain mortgage made by Andrew J. Suarez, An Unmarried Man to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as Mortgagee, as Nominee for Amerifirst Financial Corporation, its successors, and assigns, Mortgagee, dated July 5, 2022, and recorded on July 8, 2022, in Liber 1740, Page 522, Van Buren County Records, said mortgage was assigned to Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC by an Assignment of Mortgage dated July 25, 2025 and recorded December 09, 2025 in Liber 1787, Page 17, on which mortgage there is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of One Hundred Forty-Nine Thousand Eighty-Eight and 01/100 ($149,088.01) including interest at the rate of 5.25000% per annum. Said premises are situated in the Township of PORTER, Van Buren County, Michigan, and are described as: Commencing at the Northwest corner of Section 19, Town 4 South, Range 13 West for the place of beginning; thence South 89 degrees 32 minutes 39 seconds East, 340.00 feet on the North line of said Section 19; thence South 00 degrees 40 minutes 15 seconds West, 530.00 feet; thence North 89 degrees 32 minutes 39 seconds West, 340.00 feet to the West line of said Section 19; thence North 00 degrees 39 minutes 43 seconds East, 512.87 feet on the West line of said Section 19 to the Northeast corner of Section 24, Town 4 South, Range 14 West; thence continuing North 00 degrees 56 minutes 25 seconds East, 17.13 feet to the Northwest corner of said Section 19 and the place of beginning Subject to an easement for ingress and egress, in common with others, over the Westerly 66 feet of the Northwest Fractional Quarter of Section 19, Town 4 South, Range 13 West. Commonly known as: 33681 COUNTY ROAD 352, DECATUR, MI 49045 If the property is eventually sold at foreclosure sale, the redemption period will be 6.00 months from the date of sale unless the property is abandoned or used for agricultural purposes. If the property is determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241 and/or 600.3241a, the redemption period will be 30 days from the date of sale, or 15 days after statutory notice, whichever is later. If the property is presumed to be used for agricultural purposes prior to the date of the foreclosure sale pursuant to MCL 600.3240, the redemption period is 1 year. Pursuant to MCL 600.3278, if the property is sold at a foreclosure sale, the borrower(s) will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. TO ALL PURCHASERS: The foreclosing mortgagee can rescind the sale. In that event, your damages are, if any, limited solely to the return of the bid amount tendered at sale, plus interest. Dated: March 19, 2026 Randall S. Miller & Associates, P.C. Attorneys for Carrington Mortgage Services, LLC 43252 Woodward Avenue, Suite 180, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302, (248) 335-9200 Hours: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Case No. 25MI00512-1

(03-19)(04-09)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Scott B. Roberts; Atty: Orlans; 1st Pub: 3/12/2026; Atty File #: 25-011281; Insurer: FNMA
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM on APRIL 9, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information.
Default has been made in the conditions of a mortgage made by Scott B. Roberts, to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as nominee for Ruoff Mortgage Company, Inc., Mortgagee, dated October 7, 2021 and recorded October 8, 2021 in Liber 1727, Page 117 Van Buren County Records, Michigan. Said mortgage is now held by Greenway Mortgage Funding Corporation, by assignment. There is claimed to be due at the date hereof the sum of One Hundred Fifty Thousand Seven Hundred Eighteen and 73/100 Dollars ($150,718.73). Under the power of sale contained in said mortgage and the statute in such case made and provided, notice is hereby given that said mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at public venue at the place of holding the circuit court within Van Buren County, Michigan at 1:00 PM on APRIL 9, 2026.
Said premises are located in the Township of Antwerp, Van Buren County Michigan, and are described as:
Beginning at the centerline of Highway M-119, now M-40, at a point 155.79 feet (previously recorded as 151.84 feet), Northwesterly from the intersection of said centerline and the North and South eight line of the Northeast Quarter of Section 19, Town 3 South, Range 13 West, Antwerp Township, Van Buren County, Michigan; thence North 47 degrees 30 minutes 32 seconds West along said centerline 100 feet; thence South 41 degrees 43 minutes 15 seconds West 250 feet; thence South 47 degrees 30 minutes 32 seconds East 100 feet; thence North 41 degrees 45 minutes 15 seconds East 250 feet to beginning.
60986 M 40, Paw Paw, Michigan 49079
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCLA §600.3241a, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale. If the property is sold at foreclosure sale, pursuant to MCL 600.3278, the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damage to the property during the redemption period. FinCEN reporting will be required of all successful purchasers, absent a lawful exemption.
Dated: March 12, 2026
File No. 25-011281
Firm Name: Orlans Law Group PLLC
Firm Address: 1650 West Big Beaver Road, Troy MI 48084
Firm Phone Number: (248) 502.1400

(03-12)(04-02)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Jose Martinez; Atty: Schneiderman & Sherman, P.C. - Schneiderman & Sherman, PC; 1st Pub: 3/12/2026; Atty File #: 26-000628-1; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement. Notice is given under section 49c of the State Housing Development Authority Act of 1966, 1966 PA 346, MCL 125.1449c, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on April 09, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. MORTGAGE: Mortgagor(s): Jose Martinez, an unmarried man Original Mortgagee: Amerifirst Financial Corporation Date of mortgage: April 12, 2022 Recorded on April 26, 2022, Liber 1737, on Page 319, Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Michigan State Housing Development Authority Amount claimed to be due at the date hereof: One Hundred Seventy-Five Thousand One Hundred Thirty-Seven and 24/100 Dollars ($175,137.24) Mortgaged premises: Situated in Van Buren County, and described as: Lot 11, Block 4 of Dodges Addition to the Village of Lawton, according to the recorded Plat thereof, as recorded in Liber K, Page 177, Van Buren County, Michigan. Commonly known as 238 S Railroad St, Lawton, MI 49065 The redemption period will be 6 month from the date of such sale, unless abandoned under MCL 125.1449v, in which case the redemption period shall be 30 days from the date of such sale, or 15 days from the MCL 125.1449v(b) notice, whichever is later; or unless extinguished pursuant to MCL 600.3238. Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Michigan State Housing Development Authority Mortgagee/Assignee Schneiderman & Sherman P.C. 23938 Research Dr, Suite 300 Farmington Hills, MI 48335 248.539.7400 1587245

(03-12)(04-02)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: M Brian Knotek; Atty: Plunkett & Cooney - Lisa A. Hall; 1st Pub: 3/5/2026; Atty File #: (N/A); Insurer: (unknown)
NOTICE OF MORTGAGE FORECLOSURE SALE
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice. Notice of foreclosure by advertisement. Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County in Paw Paw, Michigan starting promptly at 1:00 p.m. on April 23, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of the sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information. Mortgage (the "Mortgage") made by M Brian Knotek and Kristen H. Knotek, husband and wife, as Mortgagor to Old National Bank, a national association, as Mortgagee, dated September 10, 2014, and recorded September 29, 2014, Liber 1609, Page 121, in Van Buren County Records, Van Buren County, Michigan. The balance owing on the Mortgage is $65,269.01 at the time of this Notice. The Mortgage contains a power of sale and no suit or proceeding at law or in equity has been instituted to recover the debt secured by the Mortgage, or any part of the Mortgage. The Mortgagee will apply the sale proceeds to the debt secured by the Mortgage as stated above, plus interest on the amount due at the rate of 4.25% per annum; all legal costs and expenses, including attorney fees allowed by law; and also any amount paid by the Mortgagee to protect its interest in the property. The property to be sold at foreclosure is all of that real estate situated in the Township of Almena, County of Van Buren, State of Michigan, described as: Lot 39, Thousand Oaks No. 3, according to the recorded plat thereof, as recorded in Liber 8 of Plats on Page 22. Parcel ID: 80-01-552-039-00 Commonly known address: 24271 Thousand Oaks Dr., Mattawan, MI 49071 The redemption period shall be six-months from the date of sale pursuant to MCLA 600.3240(8), unless deemed abandoned and then pursuant to the time frames provided for in MCL 600.3241a. Pursuant to MCL 600.3278, Mortgagor will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period. Dated: February 27, 2026 Old National Bank, N.A., Mortgagee PLUNKETT COONEY LISA A. HALL Attorney for Mortgagee 333 Bridge Street NW, Suite 530 Grand Rapids, Michigan 49504 (616) 752-4615

(03-05)(04-02)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: John Samuel-James Deerwester; Atty: Team X; 1st Pub: 2/26/2026; Atty File #: 528314F01; Insurer: (unknown)
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on March 26, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): John Samuel-James Deerwester, a single person
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): NewRez LLC D/B/A Shellpoint Mortgage Servicing
Date of Mortgage: May 20, 2021
Date of Mortgage Recording: May 25, 2021
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $98,650.25
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Pine Grove, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: Lot 13, Barber's LakeView Heights, according to the recorded plat thereof, as recorded in Liber 5 of Plats, Page 5, Van Buren County Records.
Common street address (if any): 31337 Baseline Rd, Gobles, MI 49055-9082
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: February 26, 2026
Trott Law, P.C.
31440 Northwestern Hwy, Suite 145
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(248) 642-2515
1585341

(02-26)(03-19)

County: Van Buren; Mtgr: Margaret Brown; Atty: Team J; 1st Pub: 2/26/2026; Atty File #: 528126F01; Insurer: FNMA
Notice of Foreclosure by Advertisement
Notice is given under section 3212 of the revised judicature act of 1961, 1961 PA 236, MCL 600.3212, that the following mortgage will be foreclosed by a sale of the mortgaged premises, or some part of them, at a public auction sale to the highest bidder for cash or cashier's check at the place of holding the circuit court in Van Buren County, starting promptly at 1:00 PM, on April 2, 2026. The amount due on the mortgage may be greater on the day of sale. Placing the highest bid at the sale does not automatically entitle the purchaser to free and clear ownership of the property. A potential purchaser is encouraged to contact the county register of deeds office or a title insurance company, either of which may charge a fee for this information:
Name(s) of the mortgagor(s): Margaret Amanda Brown, an unmarried woman
Original Mortgagee: Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as mortgagee, as nominee for lender and lender's successors and/or assigns
Foreclosing Assignee (if any): Onslow Bay Financial LLC
Date of Mortgage: June 14, 2024
Date of Mortgage Recording: July 5, 2024
Amount claimed due on date of notice: $217,767.89
Description of the mortgaged premises: Situated in Township of Porter, Van Buren County, Michigan, and described as: The West 14 acres of the Southwest fractional 1/4 of the Southwest fractional 1/4 of Section 7, Town 4 South, Range 13 West, except the South 7 acres thereof.
Together with and subject to a non-exclusive easement for pedestrian and vehicular ingress and egress over the following described parcel located in Decatur Township, County of Van Buren, commencing at the Southeast corner of Section 12, Town 4 South, Range 14 West, according to the government survey thereof; thence North 00 degrees 01 minute 04 seconds West 1317.32 feet along the East line of the Southeast 1/4 of said Section 12 to the North line of the South 1/2 of said Southeast 1/4; thence North 88 degrees 36 minutes 23 seconds West 837.58 feet along said North line to the centerline of County Road 669; thence North 30 degrees 05 minutes 17 seconds East 18.81 feet along said centerline to the place of beginning; thence continuing North 30 degrees 05 minutes 17 seconds East 18.81 feet along said centerline; thence South 88 degrees 36 minutes 23 seconds East 245.88 feet parallel with and 33.0 feet North of said North line; thence South 01 degree 23 minutes 37 seconds West 16.50 feet; thence North 88 degrees 36 minutes 23 seconds West 254.94 feet parallel with said North line to the place of beginning. Also together with and subject to a 16.5 foot wide non-exclusive easement for vehicular and pedestrian ingress and egress across real property located in Decatur Township, Van Buren County, Michigan, described as the North 16.5 feet of that certain property described as: Commencing at the Southeast corner of Section 12, Town 4 South, Range 14 West; thence North 00 degrees 01 minute 04 seconds West along the East section line 608.40 feet (also recorded as North 00 degrees 03 minutes 02 seconds West 608.25 feet); thence North 00 degrees 01 minute 04 seconds West (also recorded as North 00 degrees 03 minutes 02 seconds West) along the East section line 441.27 feet to the beginning; thence North 88 degrees 37 minutes 06 seconds West 619.66 feet; thence North 00 degrees 02 minutes 13 seconds West (also recorded as North 00 degrees 00 minutes 12 seconds West) 284.30 feet to a line 16.5 feet North of and parallel with the North line of the Southeast 1/4 of the Southeast 1/4 of section; thence South 88 degrees 36 minutes 23 seconds East (also recorded as South 88 degrees 39 minutes 00 seconds East) 619.49 feet to the East section line; thence South 00 degrees 01 minute 04 seconds East (also recorded as South 00 degrees 02 minutes 07 seconds East) along the East section line 284.64 feet to beginning
Common street address (if any): 34297 County Road 669, Lawton, MI 49065-9425
The redemption period shall be 6 months from the date of such sale, unless determined abandoned in accordance with MCL 600.3241a; or, if the subject real property is used for agricultural purposes as defined by MCL 600.3240(16).
If the property is sold at foreclosure sale under Chapter 32 of the Revised Judicature Act of 1961, pursuant to MCL 600.3278 the borrower will be held responsible to the person who buys the property at the mortgage foreclosure sale or to the mortgage holder for damaging the property during the redemption period.
Attention homeowner: If you are a military service member on active duty, if your period of active duty has concluded less than 90 days ago, or if you have been ordered to active duty, please contact the attorney for the party foreclosing the mortgage at the telephone number stated in this notice.
This notice is from a debt collector.
Date of notice: February 26, 2026
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(02-26)(03-19)

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PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

ANTWERP TOWNSHIP - ANTWERP TOWNSHIP REGIONAL TRAIL

Antwerp Township will hold a Public Hearing to consider a grant application to the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF). The hearing will take place on Tuesday, March 24th, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at Antwerp Township Hall, 24821 Front Street, Mattawan, MI 49071.

The grant application proposes the construction of an approximately five (5) mile long trail paralleling 1-94 from the MDOT Paw Paw Park-And-Ride to Root Road in Mattawan.

Residents and stakeholders are invited to attend the hearing and provide their input on the proposed project. Feedback from the community will be used to refine the grant application and ensure it aligns with public needs and expectations.

If you are unable to attend the hearing but would like to provide comments, please contact Daniel Ruzick, Township Supervisor, at antwerptownshipmi.gov

Gobles Public Schools Food Service is Requesting a Request for Proposal for equipment to redo their serving lines for the food service program in our High/Middle and Elementary School, and new convection ovens in our kitchen. Bid packets with specifications can be picked up at the Gobles Elementary School Office at 409 North State Street, Gobles, MI 49055. There will be a pre-bid walkthrough on Thursday March 26, 2026 at 10am we will meet at the entrance to the Elementary Building. Due to installation, removal of items, and electrical work, bidding parties must attend the walkthrough to get the needed information to make a proper bid on this project. Bids will be due by 9am on April 13, 2026. Bids will be opened at 9:30am on April 13, 2026 at Gobles Elementary Office. Any questions regarding the RFP should be directed too. Gobles Public Schools will be closed for Spring Break from March 27 – April 5.

Eric Meloche
Gobles Public Schools
Director of Support and Nutritional Services
409 North State Street
Gobles, MI 49055
269-628-9386

PUBLIC NOTICE OF HERBICIDE APPLICATION

The Daltons Inc., its main office at 8857 N. Syracuse-Webster Rd., Syracuse, IN 46567, has been contracted by Van Buren County Road Commission to perform custom chemical vegetation control maintenance services at designated roadside guardrail locations throughout the county.

In doing so, they will be broadcast applying the following EPA-registered materials: Bayer/Envu Esplanade 200SC (Indaziflam), Bayer/Envu Method 240SL (Aminocyclopyrachlor), Alligare Imazapyr 4SL(Isopropylamine salt) or BASF Arsenal 4#.

DO NOT ENTER OR ALLOW ENTRY INTO TREATED AREAS UNTIL SPRAYS HAVE DRIED.

This application will be completed by certified applicators employed by The Daltons Inc., during the months of April and/or May.

Additional information may be requested by contacting David Mohler or Brad Bolinger at 574-267-7511

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